The Symphony of Life

KURTZ

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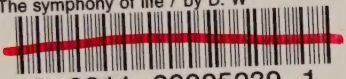

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The Symphony of Life

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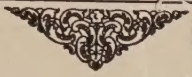

By
D. W. Kurtz, A. M., D. D.

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DEDICATED
to
my beloved wife
ETHEL WHEELER KURTZ
who
suggested this subject and text many years ago, before our marriage, and has been its inspiration through the years, and the living presence of an ever increasing harmony.

Yea, and for this very cause, adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love; for if these things are yours and abound they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing of his old sins.

—2 Peter 1: 5.

The Symphony of Life

INTRODUCTION

Religion is Life, it is the life of God in the heart of man, the life of man in harmony with God. It is life in tune with the Infinite. Symbols and creeds are helps to religion, means of expression; but religion, the Christian religion, is life itself. It is a way of thinking, feeling, doing that is in harmony with God. My subject, the Symphony of Life, implies music. I am not a musician, for which I am sorry. But I did once study the rudiments of music, and our teacher made us sing the notes of the scale. There were eight notes: do, re, me, fa, sol, la, ti, do. Those who sang in the treble clef gave the same names to the notes as we who sang in the bass clef. The important thing was that we had the notes and that we were in tune. My subject is the Parable of the Notes.

Our text gives us eight notes. They are: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. It

does not matter whether one sings in the treble clef of joy and ecstasy, or in the lower clef of the shadows of the valley of death, it only matters that we have the notes and are in tune.

We are also clearly told by our text that if we have the eight notes we have the fulness of the Christian life; this is the summary of the abundant life. But if we lack these notes, we lack the essential elements of the Christian religion. It is clear, therefore, that these eight notes make up the Symphony of Life, the whole of the Christian religion. Let us examine these notes.

FAITH

The first note in life is *faith*. "Without faith we cannot please God." "We live by faith and not by sight." It is by faith that we accomplish things. All the heroes of human history wrought by faith. Without faith we cannot live. What is faith? Faith is the venture of life. It involves the whole mind. It comprises intellect, feeling, and will. Faith is belief, trust and obedience. It believes in its object as good, true, worthy. It trusts in its

object with a feeling of confidence, interest, admiration. It serves and acts upon this belief and feeling. Faith without action is dead —it is not faith. All men who achieve anything do it by faith.

The business man has faith. He has faith in himself, his business, his community. That is, he believes, he trusts, and acts. If he did not, he would never venture. It is because of his faith that he begins, continues, and succeeds. He believes he can accomplish something; he feels an interest and enthusiasm in his enterprise; and he acts accordingly and succeeds. Without faith he would never have begun, nor continued the effort. By faith men succeed in business.

The scientist has faith. He believes in the power of reason, of mind, to attain truth; he has a feeling of confidence, trust, enthusiasm in his endeavor; and he acts upon his belief. This is faith. He has faith in the dependability of the universe; he has faith in the universality of law; he has faith in himself, in his mind, as capable of apprehending truth. Because of his faith—his belief, his enthusiasm,

his venture—he begins, continues, and succeeds in his search for truth.

The student has faith. If he has no faith, he cannot be a student. He will never start an educational career without faith. He must believe, trust, and act upon his vision. Then only will he get an education.

The farmer works by faith. How much faith it takes to sow and labor with the hope of reaping! He has belief, trust, and action, or there will be no crop to harvest. He sows in faith and reaps in faith.

Religion is based on faith. It means to believe in God, to love and trust God, and to obey God. We must believe that God is, and that he is good. We must have an attitude of reverence, trust, love, and confidence in God. And, in the third place, religion is not dynamic and real until life is molded by this belief and feeling in action, conduct, obedience to God. We must live this religion, else it is sham. Merely to accept (believe) the creed is not religion. To admire God, without obedience, is not religion. Faith demands the whole mind, the whole personality. Religion is the life of faith,

the life of the whole man, intellect, feeling and will, in harmony with God. It means to believe God, to trust him, and to obey him. This is faith.

VIRTUE

The second note of life and religion is *virtue*. This word comes from the Latin, *virtus,* which means courage. But the idea of courage and our concept virtue are not very far apart. We now know that it takes courage to do right. Any fool can do wrong. The more we study the common sins of life, the more we see how cowardly they are. When a man tells a lie it is because he is a coward. It requires courage always to do the right.

We mean by virtue the common ideas of purity, justice, righteousness. To be in harmony with God we must have the note of virtue. God is holy, he is pure, he is perfect goodness. No one can be in harmony with a good God unless he is good. "The pure in heart shall see God." No one else can. The impure and sinful can not see him. Sin makes a veil that hides God from us. The infinite

goodness cannot be experienced by the impure, the unjust, and the unrighteous.

One of our greatest Christian leaders in America, who spoke to more students than any other man in human history, said many times, "It is my experience that about ninety-eight per cent of all doubt is caused by secret sin." Just so. One cannot see God, or know God, unless he lives a clean, pure life. The symphony of life means harmony, oneness, likeness, fellowship. Only the pure can really know God.

Paul informs us (Eph. 6:10 ff) that the Christian armor must have the "girdle of truth," and "breastplate of righteousness." These are the very first requirements for the armor of life. Nothing else will stand the test. Virtue is harmony with divine goodness. All else will perish. Martineau once said, "All evil has within itself the seed of its own destruction."

Justice refers to our relation to others. Virtue includes justice. Injustice is ungodly, disharmony. The discords of our social life are likely to destroy civilization unless they are

resolved into harmony—the harmony based on justice.

Goodness demands right relations to ourselves, to our neighbors, and to God. Virtue involves righteousness—the goodness of God to pervade the whole of life. "Let justice roll down like the waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24). Justice means just acts to our neighbors. These are occasional, as the rain. Let justice come forth as freely as the rains in the springtime. But righteousness is of the heart, the motives, the inner life. Let righteousness be continuous as a perennial stream, fed by the eternal springs of heaven. Then one is in tune with God, in harmony with the Infinite.

Virtue is the second great note in the Symphony of Life. He that lacks virtue is like the man who came to the wedding feast without the wedding robe. He did not clean up. He was cast out. There was no harmony with him and the guests at that occasion. He must depart. All sin is discord, it is out of harmony with God. The first word of Jesus was "Repent ye, and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:

15). To repent means to "change your mind." You have been thinking evil, loving sin, and doing wrong. Change your minds; clean up, get into harmony with Goodness, with God. Have the courage to do right. Be pure, just, righteous. Virtue is the second note.

KNOWLEDGE

The third note is *knowledge*. How can we know God? How can we know anything else? The philosophers have disagreed for thousands of years about knowledge—and today it is as much a mystery as ever. But in practical life, we do know and live. Our truth may not be complete, but we have enough to make men free. How can we know God?

When I first crossed the Atlantic ocean it became known on the ship that I was a theological student going abroad for further study. A short, stubby man came to me who pretended to be an atheist. He said, "Are you a minister?" I replied, "I am." Whereupon he said, "You prove God and I believe." I said, "Prove God! I would not have a God so in-

significant that I could prove him to your mind." He replied, "I believe nothing I can't see." I asked him, "Don't you believe you have brains?" He changed his philosophy at once. Of course, we believe thousands of things we can't see. We believe in life, in love, in electricity, in power, in motion, in moral values, and realities that we cannot see. And none of the big things of experience can be proved by logic or mathematics. Prove life! love! matter! We cannot prove these things by logic. I have nothing against logic. It has its place. But it is not an instrument of discovery, but rather an intellectual mechanism to test the validity of intellectual propositions. By logic we determine whether our reasoning is valid or dependable. The great truths of life are not gained by logic or mathematics, but by experience.

Hobhouse tells us that the tests of truth are: (1) It must be self-consistent. (2) It must be consistent with other known truth, for truth cannot contradict truth. (3) It must rest upon experience. We do not know what life is,

but our knowledge of it is based on experience and it is in perfect harmony with our other experiences in this world. We do not know what love is, but we do know how it behaves. Paul in his famous Psalm of Love in 1 Cor. 13, did not define love, but he told us what it will DO. No one knows what electricity is, but we do know how it behaves, and when we obey the laws of its behavior, it serves our purpose.

How do we know? We know by experience. Jesus gave us the answer in John 7:17: "He that willeth to do the will of God shall know." There is no other way. He that obeys God, does his will, has fellowship with God, knows him. It is even so with all fundamental realities. The only way we can know love is to love; the only way we can know life is to live; the only way to know mercy and kindness is to do the deeds of mercy and kindness; the only way to know God is to do his will; and the knowledge of God will be shed abroad in our lives as real as any other experience of life. God will be known as the Source and Reality back of all, the mind back

of all intelligible things: the reason back of all the rational is God. We know God through his self-revelation. He has revealed himself partly through the rocks; still more in the plants; yet more through the animal creation; far more in man; infinitely more in the life of a good man; and most of all through Jesus Christ, who has manifested the full meaning of a personality in tune and harmony with God. As we obey God, walk with God, have fellowship with him in the creation of his Kingdom —the reign of truth and love—we know him. This is the third note in the Symphony of Life.

SELF-CONTROL

The next note in life is *self-control,* or *temperance.* Man is to have dominion over nature. He is to be monarch, sovereign, master of nature. The first kind of nature he should master is his own body. He that does not master his body must be its slave. He then becomes the bond-slave of sin, the slave of his passions and appetites. To be a real man, one must be master of the body. A great educator used to

say: "The purpose of education is the unsensing of the self, and the unselfing of the will." The first demand is the mastery of the body, the unsensing of the self; to master and control the senses and not be a slave to them.

Self-control was preached a great deal in the early church. As Christianity went forth into a pagan world it met the problem everywhere of men following their appetites and passions, and being slaves to their lower natures. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh." The body is the temple of the spirit and must be kept pure, free from all the lusts of the flesh. The Christian character cannot be achieved unless it gains complete mastery of the body and makes it a servant of the spirit. "How far will your body project the soul?" asks Browning, with a true Christian philosophy. "Keep the body under," says Paul. The body is to be disciplined as an athlete disciplines it, for service. The end is the soul, the personality; all exists for it. Self-control is one of the big notes in the Symphony of Life.

Paul, in Romans 12, says: "I beseech you

therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world; but be ye transformed [metamorphosed] by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." In his letter to the Galatians (5: 19ff) he warns against this lack of self-control among the Gentiles: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, ... I forewarn you that they who practice such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." One cannot be in tune with God unless there is self-control.

Aristotle taught a similar doctrine. He made "Temperance" the center of his ethics. Temperance is just as much as you need; no more, no less. It is the golden mean which is just right, somewhere between the extremes of asceticism on one side which narrows life, and prodigality and sensuousness on the other which debase and enslave life. The very heart of Greek ethics and art was the idea of balance, harmony, symmetry. They defined the

"good" in terms of "the reasonable." It is not according to reason that man should do as the animals do—follow his passions and appetites. He must be master of his body.

But self-control is not limited to the body. We must also master things—wealth and institutions. "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). "All things are yours." All things are valuable only when they are so used as to ennoble man, and bring him into harmony with God.

We need self-control in things. Luxury has degraded millions, and perhaps destroyed more than war.

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

Babylon was the market and playground of the world. It was easy for Alexander the Great to conquer her armies, but her luxury soon conquered him. Egypt was wealthy, so that King Tut could put thirteen million dollars' worth of things into his tomb; but his descendants live today in the most wretched mud huts on the earth. Rome was proud of her wealth, and the grain and gold of many

provinces poured into her; but the "Nemesis of Nations" shows how that luxury weakened her and caused her ruin. Man cannot stand luxury. The race cannot survive under the softening influences of luxury. Wealth and luxury pave the road toward a rapid decay of nations. Rome spent seven hundred years in forming her government. Then she spent fifty-three years to conquer the world. Then her wealth and luxury meant her degeneracy and downfall. Man must learn self-control—the mastery of things—or degenerate.

Frank Crane pictures to us the slavery of things. He reminds us that our living room is full of things—furniture things, things on the floor, things on the wall, things on the mantle; our dining room is full of things; the kitchen is full of things; the cellar is full of things; the attic is full of things; the store-room is full of things. Our stores are full of things and they are sold to people that do not need them and do not want them. When we make a trip we fill our suitcase full of things; the first place we come to we buy more things—souvenir things; then we buy another suitcase and fill that full

of things; then we return and build an addition to our house and fill that full of things; then when we are ready to die we hire a lawyer to make a great long will to get rid of things!

Some years ago the Honorable James Bryce of England came to this country as ambassador. A reception was given in his honor in New York City. One American reminded him of the wealth, the factories, the exports, the things of New York. Another spoke at length about the things of Pennsylvania, and so on ad nauseam. When Mr. Bryce was asked to respond he spoke with the vision and courage of a prophet. He reminded his auditors that the greatness of a nation does not depend upon the "things" it possesses, but upon the number of good people that it maintains. "Where are your men of vision, 'for where there is no vision the people perish.' Why did you not speak of your poets, your composers, your artists, your prophets, philosophers, and statesmen? The greatness of a nation depends upon its men of vision." Why do we not boast about our poets—our Shakespeares, Miltons, Dantes? We have none. Why do we not boast of our

Phidias, Praxiteles, Michael Angelo, Raphael and Correggio? We have none. Why do we not boast of our Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Bach, Chopin, and Wagner? We have none. Why do we not boast about our great prophets who can lead the nation to a realization of God—men like Wesley, Knox, Calvin, Augustine, Savanorola, Chrysostom? We have none. Why do we not boast about our philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kant? We have none. Why do we not boast about our statesmen—Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln? We think we will bud some statesmen soon!

I am not pessimistic, but the fact remains, we have not been interested in personality; we have spent all our energies on *things*. We increased the national wealth from seven billions to four hundred billions in one generation. As we increased our wealth, we multiplied our comforts and luxuries. We are spending one dollar in every six on luxuries. We have not been thinking of success in terms of poetry, art, music, philosophy, and religion, but in terms of things. We need self-control, bal-

ance, harmony. We must once again enthrone the soul and get the mastery of things and make them serve the human spirit. Self-control is one of the greatest needs. This is the fourth note in the Symphony of Life.

PATIENCE

I used to think *patience* meant to keep quiet when I wished to say something very much. Then I read Job. He talked—he argued with God. After a deeper study I found patience means steadfastness, holding on, not giving up. It is that tenacity of purpose that will not give up. Then I understood Job. He did not renounce his faith. His wife said to him, "Say good-by to God and die." But he would not, but instead—"The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Patience is the quality that holds on, that is steadfast, that will continue to the end. How important this note is in life! Every business man needs it. No one can expect to succeed unless he sticks to his job. He must hold on.

I know a business man who has changed his job, or business, every six months for the last twenty years. He does not have as much now as he had when he started. "A rolling stone gathers no moss." People who are always shifting and changing do not succeed. Patience wins.

The student needs patience. Unless he continues steadfastly in his course of study, he will not succeed. No scientist ever became famous unless he had the patience to study for years and search until nature revealed her secrets. No artist ever achieved fame that was enduring without paying the price in patient study and practice for many years.

A few years ago I was snow-bound on Saturday before Easter. I sat in the railroad station of one of our Kansas cities. I noticed that others were snow-bound also. The man sitting next to me spoke with a broken accent. His manager came to me and asked, "Do you know to whom you are speaking?" I replied in the negative. "This man is the greatest cellist in the world. He is without a peer. He is absolutely the greatest performer on the cello

in the world. But, I would have you know it is not an accident. He is not a genius as was Mozart and men like that. This man is the greatest cellist because of the hard work he put in on this art. He studied and practiced for twenty-nine years before he gave a public concert." Twenty-nine years of study! Why is not an American the greatest cellist in the world? The average American wants to take a correspondence course and "get by." Well, I am not cynical, I mean it. I am heart-sick when I talk to the American people who want to rush quickly into business and make money. They do not take time to get the necessary preparation for life. Patience, steadfastness, holding on, keeping at the task till it is solved—this is the way to success.

How much more is patience needed in religion. There is no short-cut, clap-trap way to the deep things of the spirit. God does not cast his pearls before swine. Anyone can get the deep things of the spirit who has patience —who pays the price—who is worthy. It takes time to grow the character of a saint. The Kingdom of God is like a seed that grows,

and produces "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." It takes time and patience.

Jesus gave us a wonderful parable when he spoke about the sower. He sowed good seed, but there were varieties of soil. Some was impervious, some was superficial, some was preoccupied, and some was good. It is that superficial soil that is so plentiful. People that have no patience—no steadfastness—who do not stay on any task long enough to succeed—who do not give religion half of a chance to bear fruit.

Patience also implies hope. Without hope life is paralyzed and no one can use his full energies. There must be hope else all effort is weakened. Hope peers through the clouds and sees the silver lining. Hope has a conviction that there is a reward for the patient and worthy toiler. Hope is rewarded. It is the dynamic of patience.

Patience also implies endurance. There is something very heroic in patience. It endures disappointments and delays with a grim courage that challenges admiration. But the uni-

verse is so made that they that endure with patience shall in no wise lose their reward. Such a person can always respect himself, and win the admiration of all. Patience is the fifth great note in the Symphony of Life.

GODLINESS

The Greek word for *godliness* is often translated by the word "piety." It implies that one has a sense of need, a dependence and thirsting for God. It is humility. Pride is the feeling of self-sufficiency. The Pharisees were proud. They could not grow better, because they were perfectly satisfied with themselves. They did not hunger and thirst for more of the love and grace of God. Humility is this sense of need, of dependence. Augustine was once asked, "What is the first word in your religion?" He answered, "Humility." "What is the second word in your religion?" He answered, "Humility." "What is the third word of your religion?" He again answered, "Humility." Godliness is this sense of hunger and thirst for a fuller fellowship with God.

I often wonder what would happen if everyone came to church with a genuine hunger and thirst for religion. If each would say, "I want more truth today—more love, more mercy, more kindness." They would pull the preach out of the preacher. How happy our teachers would be if every student hungered and thirsted for knowledge. What a wonderful experience that would be! I once approached a professor with this remark, for I had a question, "Professor, I would like to know something." He put his arm around me and said, "I am so glad that someone wants to know something." He embarrassed me so I forgot my question.

He that seeketh findeth. If we would seek divine truth and love and wisdom we would get it. Godliness means the desire for a closer walk with God. It is the opposite of pride. Godliness is the sense of need, of dependence, the asking, seeking, knocking at the door, for the life of God in the human heart. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." This is true piety, godliness.

The man that says he has no joy in religion, no satisfaction in his church life, may perhaps find he has not been seeking for the deeper things of life. If he has not grown in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, perhaps he has not been thirsting for the enrichment of his spirit. Of course God does not force his presence upon us. We must want him, desire his presence, hunger and thirst for a fuller measure of truth and love, then we shall be filled. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst—for they shall be filled."

BROTHERLY KINDNESS

Jesus summed up the whole of religion as *love to God and man*. "Love your neighbor as yourself." Also, "all ye are brethren" (Matt. 23:8). "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." We can sum up the whole duty of man as follows: Man should be sovereign over nature, man should be brother to man, man should be child or son of God. Our relation to human beings should be that of members of the same family. God is the

Father, and all we are children of God and brothers to each other. Brotherliness is one of the biggest notes in the Symphony of Life.

One of the greatest surprises I ever received in reading the Bible is found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:23-24): "If, therefore, thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Is this possible—first be reconciled to your brother, and then to God? That is the text, "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen" (1 John 4:20). Too many people think they can do their religion by believing the creed and performing the symbols of the church, and live like pagans towards men. This is wholly impossible. "If a man says he loves God and hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20). God loves folks, and we cannot be in tune with God unless we, like him, love folks. There can be no harmony with God unless we love folks even as he

loves them. "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). Sonship means likeness. We must be like God in our relation to men.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-27) illustrates this truth. The priest was in a hurry to get to his altar at Jericho. Or, perhaps more truly, his religion had no place at all for mercy and brotherliness; it was creed and formalism. He had no time to help the man in need. The Levite followed the priest—he looked at the wounded man, but did not help. But a Samaritan came along, the man that was considered by the Jews as godless, and when he saw the poor man who was robbed and maltreated, he rushed to him, listened to hear his heart beat, found he was yet alive, and quickly bound up his wounds to prevent more loss of blood; he ministered to him as though he were his own brother or son, took him to the near-by inn, and provided for him. Was he related? No, the man that was wounded and robbed was presumably a Jew of Jerusalem. Why did the Samaritan minister

to a Jew when the Jews hated the Samaritans? The only answer is, the man that was robbed was a human being and was in need. "Who is my neighbor?" was the question of the Jerusalem lawyer. "Who was neighbor to the man that fell among the robbers?" was the question of Jesus. Even the lawyer could now answer the question, "He that showed mercy on him." Now, Jesus did not say, "Go thou and put that in your creed, and repeat it three times each day; write it upon your doorposts and wear it upon your foreheads and arms." No, he said, "Go, and do thou likewise."

Another wonderful text is found in Matt. 25:31-46. I call it, "The Parable of the Great Surprise." Some call it the parable of the sheep and the goats. What a surprise came to both groups. The sheep represent the poor people who heard Jesus gladly. The proud Pharisees used to call them "dogs," and growled at them not to come too near else their defiling shadow would fall upon the Pharisee and he would have to take a bath before he could eat his meal. But to these poor people the Son of Man says: "Come, ye blessed of

my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." I can see the surprise on their faces, their eyes are opening wide, they are sure he is making a mistake, for they are not "the religious." "For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Now, they are absolutely sure that he made a mistake. For they had never done these things unto *him*. No nice folks ever came down their way. It is all a mistake. They did not do these mercies to him. But here is the answer. It is all between the lines. "Don't you remember when your neighbor was hungry and you fed him? Don't you remember those poor lepers over on the hill, how you shared your last crust with them? Don't you remember how this one, and that one was poor, naked, and in prison, and you ministered unto them?" And they answered, "Yes, we remember all that, we always help the poor unfortunates, if we did not they would perish, but we did not

do it to *you*." Then comes the answer, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of these, even these least, ye did it unto me." Oh, what a surprise. Yes, here is the answer. "Heaven is made of love, of mercy, of brotherly kindness, and you had these. You are in harmony with heaven, you are in tune with the Infinite. Enter into the Kingdom of love and mercy and kindness, you belong there."

Then the King turns to the others—the goats—the proud Pharisees. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels." Here, too, was a surprise. "There must be some mistake. He does not know who we are. We are Pharisees, the holy. We pray three times each day, we fast twice each week. We tithe mint, anise, and cummin. We keep the letter of the law. We expanded the Ten Commandments into four thousand and four hundred commands and spend all our time learning them and keeping them. We are holy. There is some mistake." But the King says, "I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and

ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." I can hear them growl in their argumentative style: "When did we see you in this condition? You were not in our midst. You never came to our houses and asked for hospitality." And I can see again between the lines: "Do you remember poor Lazarus at your doorstep and you had no compassion for him?" And they growl, "He was a leper, unclean." "Yes, but he was human, and in need." "Do you remember that poor peasant whom you cast into prison for debt, and there he would have starved but for the kindness of others?" And they argue, "Rabbi Eliezar and Rabbi Ebenezer, and Rabbis X. Y. Z. interpreted our traditions that made it legal. We kept the law." But he says, "You have made void the law of God, the law of Love by your tradition. Oh, the kingdom of God is made of love, of mercy, of kindness, you do not have these; therefore depart from me, no one can be in tune with God, in harmony with the Father, nor enjoy this reign of love except by practicing brotherly kindness."

"Love your neighbor as yourself." How can this be done? I used to think it could not be done. For I thought I had to love my neighbor as I loved my father. I could not do it. We had one neighbor that was the meanest, most contrary, obstreperous person I ever saw. How could I love him as I loved my father? It could not be done. My father was a monument of goodness. He was the kindest man I ever knew. All the children for many miles called him "grandpa." They all loved him. How could I love all persons, especially such mean folks, as I loved my father? It is impossible. And the Bible does not say that I should.

Must I love everybody as I loved my sainted mother? I cannot do it, and the Bible does not say that I should. Must I love everybody as I love my children? Again, I cannot do it. Only a parent can understand how our hearts go out to these children of ours. Long before they can respond and reciprocate, we love them with a devotion so deep that our own lives are as nothing when their interest is at stake. Should I love everybody as I love my wife?

I'd get into trouble if I did. Well, what does the Bible say? "Love your neighbor as yourself." How does a man love himself? There is no feeling in it. If a man hug himself for an hour, he finds no more feeling than if he hugged a post. No, when a man loves himself he does five things: He protects his life; he protects his health; he protects his reputation; he protects his property; and he promotes his happiness. When he loves his neighbor as himself, he values his neighbor's life as he values his own. He values his neighbor's property as he does his own, he values his neighbor's happiness as he values his own. This is the justice-mercy relation. It is the golden rule in practice. It is the law of the family—the brotherhood of man, the law of God, the Symphony of Life.

Brotherhood is at the basis of democracy. The spirit of democracy must be the family spirit, where each contributes according to ability, and each receives according to need. Democracy is organized brotherly kindness. It must be applied to all human relations: political, economic, social, international, and inter-

racial. Man is a social being. He must relate himself properly to his fellowmen or perish. The law of survival and well-being is brotherly love; there is no security without goodwill. This is our safety, and absolutely necessary for survival and happiness. Brotherly kindness is the seventh note in the Symphony of Life.

LOVE

Love is the fulfillment of the law. God is love. Without love no virtue is complete. Only love can enrich life to the full. Love is the creative power of the soul, the dynamic that makes life efficient and complete. The fulness of life comes from within. Love releases the powers of the soul and gives them expression. Only he who loves the truth can know its depth. He alone who loves beauty and goodness can enjoy their richness. Love is the divine essence, and the divine way of life that makes us sons of God.

But what is love? We use the term in so many ways that it almost loses its meaning. We hear people say: "I love my country, I

love my pets, I love my parents, I love my friend, I love boiled cabbage," etc. This is a misuse of the term. The Greek language is more fortunate. When the Greeks wished to express conjugal love they used the word "eros"; parental love, "storge"; friendship or chumship by "philia"; humanitarian love by "philanthropia" or "philadelphia." But when they expressed the idea of divine love they used the word "agape." This is a much bigger word. Jesus could say, "Thou *shalt* love." But we do not use the word "shall" with conjugal love. One loves there by instinct, he falls in love. The Greeks painted their God of love, Eros, blind; he made so many foolish matches.

Divine love involves the whole of the mind. Dr. Garvie of London has rightly defined agape as having the elements of intellect, feeling and will. Love is (1) a judgment of value. We see in the objects of love—God and man—supreme values. (2) It is an attitude of interest, a feeling of appreciation, the emotion of sympathy and devotion. (3) It always wills the good. One must behave with good

will, and make the necessary sacrifice and effort to do that which is good. God does the good to us, even though it may be the rod of affliction. A surgeon or a parent does that which is good, even though it may cause pain. Love is not sentimentalism. It always wills the good. To love our neighbor is, first, to recognize in him a human being, a possible son of God. And secondly, to be interested and sympathetic toward him; feeling a sense of personal responsibility for his comfort and welfare. Thirdly, love does and wills that which is good. It is good-will in action, it functions in the promotion of welfare.

Paul told us what love will do, how it behaves: "Love is very patient, very kind. Love knows no jealousy; love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient" (1 Cor. 13, Moffatt's Translation).

Love is the creative principle of life. The

poet and the artist could never create anything without the insight and power of a brooding love. It is love that enables them to enter sympathetically into rapport with the truth and beauty which they contemplate. It is love of truth that enables the scientist to find the facts that finally reveal the mysteries of nature. It is love for God that opens the mind and heart to the revelation of God. It is love for a cause that gives the power to the hero to do the impossible. Love releases the vital reserves of life and enables the mother to do the superhuman feats of sacrifice. It was the love of Christ that constrained Paul to carry the Gospel to the stragetic cities of the Roman Empire and make possible the dominion of the church. It is this love that gains the victory over sin and temptation and makes out of weak humanity triumphant sons of God. It is the "expulsive power of a new affection" that transforms the human heart from selfishness to sainthood. Love is the dynamic of God in the life of man to harmonize the soul with the Eternal. Love is the last note in the Symphony of Life.

LACKING THE NOTES

The trouble is that so many people lack these notes, or at least they lack some of them. Their lives are narrow, shrivelled, materialistic, and disappointing. They do not know the meaning of a joyous, triumphant life of harmony with the Infinite. Because they do not have faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love, they know nothing of the real meaning of life. These people merely exist. They have no hope for the future; no achievements now, no visions of a better day; no appreciation of the true, the good and the beautiful. The tragedy of our civilization is that there are so many people in the world who live very little above the animals. All they know is their little round of existence. The beauties of nature, the joys of achievement, the creative power of the human soul, the fellowship with the Infinite and with noble souls, are all foreign to their experience. They lack the notes, hence lack the harmony which would mean life. They need the notes in the scale of the Infinite that make the Symphony of Life.

WEAK NOTES

Some people have the notes of life, but they are so weak that no one can hear them. If you have these notes, sing out so people can hear. Get away from the border-line. Be a witness of the faith that is in you. Let there be no doubt as to where you stand. Some people have just enough religion to make them miserable. It gives them a little conscience so they feel cramped, but not enough power to gain the victory and freedom. Sing out.

Jesus said, "Let your light shine." No, he did not say that. Our light always shines, we cannot help the shining of our light. It is always shining. But too often it is the red light of sin, the blue light of pessimism, the green light of envy and jealousy, the yellow light of greed and gold, the purple light of ambition, the dark light of indifference, when it ought to be the white light of truth that reveals the Christ. Your light always shines. But it is the white light that enables people to see the Christ. "Let your light *so* shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

DISCORDS

What is the matter with the world? Just discords, that is all. Instead of faith there is fear and doubt; instead of virtue, vice and sin; instead of knowledge, ignorance, superstition, falsehood and sentimentalism; instead of self-control, there is slavery and bondage to the appetites and passions of the body, and to wealth and luxury; instead of patience and steadfastness, there is superficiality, impatience and recklessness; instead of a godly hunger and thirst for truth, goodness and beauty, there is bigotry, pride and self-satisfaction; instead of brotherly kindness and good will, there is selfishness and egotism; instead of divine love that sees, values, and does those things that endure, that are eternal, that belong to God, there is hate that blinds, rebellion that opposes, and indifference that ignores the things that pertain to Life. Just discords, that is all. The world is full of discords.

How can we get rid of the discords? There is only one way—to sing the true notes. There is no other way. You cannot get rid of dark-

ness except by light; you cannot overcome wrong, except with the right. The only thing that can overcome error is truth; and the only way to get rid of the discords of life is to flood the earth with harmony. It is the business of the church to flood the earth with light, that the darkness may disappear; to flood the earth with truth, love, goodness, and virtue, so the wrongs and sins of men may be overcome.

The discords of doubt and fear can only be dispelled by the true note of a virile faith. The discords of vice will be destroyed by the note of virtue; ignorance will yield to knowledge; slavery will disappear with a triumphant self-control; the superficial can become like a rock by learning patience; the self-satisfied may discover their littleness and hunger for a larger, richer life and be filled; the selfish will find a new joy in the abounding blessedness of service as they learn brotherly-kindness; and the most rebellious will melt before the greatest thing in the world, Love. There is just one way to get rid of discords, that is by the true notes. Our children do not need to sow their

wild oats. I do not want my boys to learn all the discords of life; I do want them to learn the true notes. I do not want them to taste all the poisons that exist; but I do want them nourished on wholesome food. There is the best way of living, the way of harmony with God is that way. The notes of harmony show us the way to go. They overcome all the discords of the world. Sing the true notes, and the discords are gone.

ULYSSES AND ORPHEUS

You have read the story of Ulysses. After the siege of Troy he wandered many years. He came to the Island of the sirens. He was a worldly-wise man. He knew that Circe had her sirens to sing and beckon the sailors to their isle, then turn them into swine to destroy them. Ulysses wanted to hear the sirens sing, but did not want to suffer the consequences. So he devised this plan. He gave orders that his oarsmen should sail to yonder point without stopping. He put wax into their ears so they could not hear the sirens sing. He

had himself tied to the mast of the ship. He had also ordered that no matter how much he pulls and tugs at his bonds, they must not loose him till they reach the point yonder. All was ready. They rowed onward. He heard the sirens sing and was at once overcome by their charm. He called at the top of his voice, "Turn the boat," "turn the boat." But the oarsmen and sailors could neither hear him nor the sirens. He began to pull and struggle at the mast, but no one loosed him, because of the previous orders. So the old fool succeeded in getting by the island of the sirens. In actual life, people do not "get by"; their plans miscarry. Only in fiction and poetry can a man like this succeed.

But my parable is not finished. A little later Orpheus came that way. He also knew the wiles of the sirens. He did not want his men destroyed, and he did not want to hear the sirens. He asked nothing for himself, that his men might not have. Before getting close enough for the songs of the sirens to be heard, Orpheus began to play on his harp, and he made such beautiful, sweet music, far more

charming than any siren, but ennobling and pure. They sailed past the isle of the sirens. No one had to be chained to the oars, no one deafened with wax, nor tied to the mast. All were perfectly free—filled with the good, the pure, the noble—and they never heard the sirens sing.

So is the religion of Jesus Christ. We are to be so busy building the kingdom of God, establishing the reign of truth and love and kindness and beauty in the lives of men, that we never hear the sirens sing. "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself." Fill your life completely full of faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love, and you will never hear the sirens sing.

CHRIST, THE WHOLE SYMPHONY

This ideal may seem too high for many. "It cannot be attained, what is the use of trying?" Such, no doubt, is the feeling of many. But let us face the facts. Jesus asked men to go the second mile, when they thought, and found by experience, the first mile almost impossible. But Jesus showed that the second mile is easier than the first, with the dynamic of love, the power of a great passion, with the creative energies of a genuine devotion. To go the first mile under the sense of duty is most difficult; but to go the first and second under the impulse of love is not only possible, but is a daily fact of experience.

How can we get these eight notes? Jesus Christ had all of them. He is the whole Symphony of Life. He was in perfect tune with God—in harmony at all times with the Father. There never was a moment when he was not conscious of doing the Father's will. He was in tune with the Infinite. He knew the notes on the treble clef of joy unspeakable; he knew the bass notes on the lower clef, and was in

tune in the Garden, and on Calvary. He knew the height and depth of human experience, and yet in perfect harmony with God.

Jesus had perfect faith; perfect virtue; perfect knowledge; perfect self-control; perfect patience; perfect godliness; perfect brotherly-kindness; and perfect love. In him was the fulness of life, the fulness of personality, the richness of experience that is possible for a soul to have. He was at all times in tune with God. Whether it was at the wedding, at the home of Mary and Martha, in the wheat fields, in Jerusalem, in conflict with hypocrisy, in the Garden, or on the first Easter morning, he was always in Tune. He had all the notes in their perfect fulness and richness. "In him was life and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

How can we get these eight notes? Have Jesus Christ in your life and you have the whole symphony. Love him and let his spirit dominate all your thoughts, your affections, and your deeds and you are in harmony with God, you have the Symphony of Life. The religion of Jesus Christ is the religion of joy.

THE SYMPHONY OF LIFE

The various words of joy and blessedness are found over a thousand times in the Bible. The joy of the religion of Christ is the joy of victory. It is the daily triumph of faith over fear; of virtue over vice; of knowledge and insight over ignorance and superstition; it is the victory of the soul over the bondage of the body and things; it is the triumph of patience and godliness. It is the fellowship of love over the blighting influence of selfishness; and it is the fulness of Life, which comes from the love of God that passeth all understanding.

The religion of Christ is the Symphony of Life. This is the meaning of the Christian religion.

THE END

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